

Washington State Patrol Media Release

Chief Ronal W. Serpas



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WSP Chief Accepts State Interoperability Committee Chair Position

Washington State Patrol Chief Ronal Serpas has accepted the appointment as chair of the State Interoperability Executive Committee. The appointment was made by Information Services Board Chair Tom Fitzsimmons.

The Washington State Information Services Board is a 15-member board made up of leadership from the Legislature, state agencies, higher education, and the private sector. A policy-making organization, the board is responsible for the oversight of state information technology investments.

"Ensuring that public agencies communicate with one another effectively using a variety of technologies is of utmost importance to ensuring public safety," Chief Serpas said. "I am looking forward to working with a very talented group of professionals in making sure the citizens of Washington have a well defined and effective public safety communications system in place to serve them," Chief Serpas said.

Chief Serpas will be responsible for leading the committee through a rapid assessment and development of an action plan regarding public safety communication systems. The action plan will focus on improving communication between public safety organizations on a daily basis and in times of emergency.

Gov. Gary Locke signed House Bill 1271 into law on April 16, 2003, which created the State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC). The SIEC is responsible for managing how public safety agencies communicate within Washington State. Public safety agencies across the state rely on wireless communications to carry out their daily operations and coordinate responses for major events such the Nisqually earthquake and the World Trade Organization riots.

"As the recent blackout on the east coast demonstrated, public safety agencies must be prepared for a variety of communications challenges," said State Senator Luke Esser, chair of the Senate Technology and Communications Committee. "Chief Serpas' expertise in public safety, coupled with his experience as Chief of the Washington State Patrol during and since the September 11 terrorist attacks, gives him the tools to develop a first rate action plan for public safety communications."

“Our state’s public safety communications networks are the first line of response during a catastrophic event. It is essential that government agencies’ functions, at all levels, are coordinated at such times,” said Representative Glen Anderson, sponsor of HB 1271. “The legislature will be watching closely to assure that this project is accomplished in a timely and effective manner so public safety is not compromised. Chief Serpas has excellent credentials to accomplish this task,” he said.

The tragedy of Sept. 11, 2001, served as a catalyst for public safety agencies across the nation to examine how they communicate with each other, or interoperate, in times of disaster. Public safety agencies find that such coordination is essential for disaster preparedness, emergency management, and public safety. Coordination will result in more cost-effective use of state resources and improved government services to those who work, play, and live within Washington State.

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